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ABSTRACT

South Africa's perpetuation, through its various public agencies, of separating its ethnic/language groups has gradually fostered a negative response among university educators toward the role of second language teaching and testing. As a result of this attitude, future language teachers are not learning the necessary skills or appropriate attitudes that will be required of them once they begin work as professional teachers. South Africans have achieved bilingualism and multilingualism in spite of and not because of their educational system. Since most language testing in South Africa is aimed at certification, language teachers know very little about how language proficiency is actually tested; their knowledge is limited to the basic principles of testing for achievement. This type of testing, accordingly, reflects the teaching, the teaching reflects the attitudes, and the attitudes reflect the official language policies. Teachers are not asked to consider what the purpose of testing is. Little or no time in teacher training is devoted to diagnostic or proficiency testing, design standardization, or test validation. South Africa's educational system is in a state of flux, with teachers and pupils caught in the middle of political and social conflict and uncertainty. Still,the forces resisting change are strong. Syllabuses and testing procedures have become entrenched in a self-perpetuating system where attitudes run deep. (MSE)

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Testing - what kind of instrument is it? Exactly?

By Laurence Bam and Michael Rice

This paper seeks to address two questions which can then be used to answer the question the title poses.

1. What methods of assessment are typically employed in South Africa?
2. What do teachers in training in South Africa need to know about language testing?

In seeking to address these two questions it will be necessary to provide some background on the number and diversity of languages and language varieties in South Africa, language policies, political and educational considerations all within the context of an historical overview. It will also be necessary to consider which factors need to be taken into account in language testing in formal educational institutions.

1. Background.

1.1 The language bredie.

The Southern African population is characterized by a high degree of diversity. The arrival of the first white settlers in 1652 and subsequent waves of European immigration added to and further complicated the language mix so that after some 300 odd years the complex of languages and language varieties spoken in South Africa may best be described as a bredie.(1)

For those not familiar with the culinary facts of South African life a bredie is a rich thick stew consisting of mutton and a wide variety of vegetables.

The ingredients that have gone into the South African language bredie come from the following sources: the two so-called 'official' languages: English and Afrikaans; the ten bantu languages: Zulu, Xhosa, North Sotho, South Sotho, Tswana, Swazi, Venda, North Ndabele, South Ndabele, Tsonga; the Khoi-San family of languages of the Hottentots and Bushmen; the languages imported from India: Tamil, Telegu, Hindi, Gujarati and Urdu; the Chinese spoken in the Hong Kong region; the languages of European immigration: Portuguese, German, Italian, Hebrew, Dutch, French, Greek; and the language of the Malay slaves brought from Batavia to the Cape in the 18th century.

This mixture of languages has long been recognized as a fact of South African life. In fact as early as 1836 in a play entitled **Kaatjie Kekkelbek, or Life Among the Hottentots** written and produced by Andrew Geddes Bain the protagonist comments on the contradictions, injustices and corruption suffered by the displaced indigenous people of the Eastern Cape frontier as a consequence of white settlement in the area in a language that accurately reflects "the market-place where Dutch, English and a host of indigenous tongues interfuse once they deal with common concerns: land, stock-theft, liquor, food and justice."(2) Today, there is an influential movement in literary circles in South Africa that has little sympathy with monolingualism. Many authors, especially those from the black communities make no concessions to readers who are mono or at best bilingual. Poetry and plays, particularly those concerned with political protest exploit the range of linguistic options available within the varieties of languages that make up the South African linguistic bredie.

1.2 Language policies

It cannot come as a surprise that in a country as divided linguistically as well as ethnically and politically as South Africa, politically motivated language policies have dominated its linguistic history since the arrival of the first white settlers in 1652. The language of officialdom during the Dutch East India Company's administration of the Cape was Dutch. It was the language of the courts before which Hottentot malefactors were brought; it was also the language of the schools. After the arrival of the French Hugenots in the 1700s, official policy actively discouraged the use of French in favour of Dutch. When the British took over the administration of the Cape in 1820 under Lord Charles Somerset the policy was changed in favour of English and could conceivably have contributed to the general dissatisfaction of the Boers which resulted in the Great Trek of 1838. Later in the 19th century when the Transvaal Republic was threatened by a large influx of gold hungry immigrants (Uitlanders) President Kruger's government forbade the teaching of English in state schools and decreed that only Dutch could be used in the courts. The attitude of the non-Dutch speaking whites who were predominantly English speaking, was probably never more accurately reflected than in the mouth of a character who appeared in a novel at the time. He described the Taal, as the variety of Dutch spoken in the Transvaal at the time was known, as: "combinations of unpleasant sounds and imperfect grammar which (the Boers) are pleased to call a language."(3) The Taal, a "vile and illiterate(sic) dialect..." came off a poor second when compared with "the language of Shakespeare".(4) It is worth mentioning, in passing, that this English speaking prejudice has not disappeared yet. Which only goes to show that language chauvenism is no different from any other kind of chauvenism, especially when it comes to a conflict for language supremacy.

Between the end of the Boer War in 1902 and the Act of Union in 1910 Lord Milner the British High Commissioner actively campaigned for the supremacy of English. The Education Ordinance of 1903 stipulated that English was to be the sole medium of instruction in all state schools; Dutch could be taught only as a subject. It was not until 1925 that Afrikaans became the second so-called 'official' language.

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1.3 Political and educational considerations

The spread of and prestige of English in the black community.

In the meantime what of the spread and influence of English amongst the indigenous population? English speaking missionaries had been active since the early part of the 19th century spreading the Gospel and the benefits of English education amongst the black population. Influential mission stations were established in the north western Cape at Kuruman under the leadership of the Rev Robert Moffat whose daughter married David Livingston, and at Lovedale and Healdtown in the eastern Cape on the initiative of the Governor of the Cape Sir George Grey. His policy was aimed at integrating the native population into the economic life of the Colony. The principal of Lovedale:"fully recognised the political expediency of teaching Africans English, and no less appreciated the value of English as a language per se, and as a means for opening to the African youth of the country, the world's storehouse of knowledge. English should become the possession of every educated African, and to this end it should be taught competently."(5) And a little later in 1897 an anonymous writer made the point that:"A thorough knowledge of English is for the Kafir young men the road to employment and preferment."(6) Both these writers were reflecting an ideological commitment to the teaching of English to the indigenous population that survived for several generations and finally came into conflict with the stated aims of Dr Verwoed's education policy in the 1950s. Such was the enthusiasm for learning English that the first newspaper written and published by blacks for blacks in English appeared in 1884: **Imvo Zabantsundu.**

It was in the eastern Cape too that the University of Fort Hare was founded in 1916. The English course made few concessions to the fact that none of the students were mother tongue speakers of English. Students read Shakespeare, Dickens, Thackeray, Scott, Burns, Keats, Shelly and so on. The standard was high. Students were expected to achieve a degree of competence comparable with first language users. For those who mastered the language, and the course reading became in the words of one of Fort Hare's most famous sons, Z K Matthews:"sheer joy".(5) During the period between the founding of Fort Hare until the Extension of Universities Act of 1959 which separated the universities on ethnic grounds and finally destroyed any autonomy Fort Hare still had, Fort Hare had a profound affect on the teaching of English to the black population. It attracted students from the presitigious black schools such as St Peter's in Johannesburg (attended by Es'kia Mphalele) and Adams College in Natal. The students coming from these and similar schools elsewhere in South Africa saw themselves as an elite, who had a duty to commit themselves to the upliftment of their people. At Fort Hare they received not only a sound academic training but a political education that drew many of them quite naturally to the ANC. Perhaps the best known Fort Hare graduates, apart from Z K Matthews, are Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo. Many of its lesser known graduates became teachers of English in black schools in the 1930s, 40s and early 50s.

The prestige of English was enhanced for the black population by the emergence of black playwrights, poets, novelists and particularly the journalists employed by Drum Magazine. While at the same time Afrikaans was more and more identified as the language of the oppressor.

1.3.1 Language diversity

Although the number and variety of languages spoken in South Africa cannot compare with India, the particular circumstances that have contributed to the South African language mix, particularly the circumstances obtaining in the last forty or so years bear special examination in terms of how population groups have been fragmented.

The following table indicates the approximate number of mother tongue speakers per language in South Africa, based on the 1980 census:

Afrikaans	5 000 000
English	3 000 000
Zulu	6 100 000
Xhosa	2 900 000
Southern Sotho	1 900 000
Northern Sotho	2 500 000
Tswana	1 500 000
Venda	200 000
Ndabele North & South	400 000
Swazi	700 000
Tsonga	900 000
Portuguese	100 000
German	40 000
Italian	16 000
Greek	16 000
Hindi	26 000
Gujarati	25 000
Urdu	14 000
Telegu	4 000
Tamil	25 000

These statistics reveal a high degree of language diversity which is interesting in itself, but as significant are the factors that have continued to contribute to and further aggravate the fragmentation of the language population. These factors are to be found in the main, though not exclusively, in the South African government's racial policies implemented and pursued since 1948 with varing degrees of success, efficiency and conviction. Economic and geographical factors have also had a role to play.

1.3.2 Urban and industrial expansion.

The period immediately after the Anglo-Boer conflict and for some sixty odd years thereafter saw English as the major urban language. It dominated and still does to a large extent, economic and commercial life. Most EL1 speakers lived in the main metropolitan areas of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth and East London. The majority of the white population though was Afrikaans-speaking and rurally

based. From the 1930s onward the Afrikaans-speaking population was attracted to the towns as it sought to escape from rural poverty. With increasing industrialization, especially after World War 2, and the active encouragement of the Nationalist government through its policies of job reservation and preferment and the creation of a burgeoning bureaucracy Afrikaans speaking people were attracted to the cities. Skilled and semi-skilled labour was needed to keep the economy growing. These jobs were reserved for and filled by the white proletariate. At the same time a policy of preferment ensured that the civil service which until the end of the 1940s had a strong English speaking component, became Afrikanerized. This policy not only ensured that Afrikaans speaking people had access to secure and guaranteed employment, but that the daily implementation of the machinery of apartheid was in the hands of those who had a vested interest in seeing it work. This development had especial significance for black education.

The expanding economy based on vigorous industrial growth outside of the mining industry also attracted vast numbers of black unskilled labourers from all parts of South Africa to the urban areas. The blacks represented a pool of cheap labour without which the economy could not grow. However their existence in the cities contradicted the Nationalist government's stated aim of keeping the ethnic communities in the country separated. As a consequence of forced removals from the main metropolitan centres huge black ghettoes were created outside the white cities. The government tried unsuccessfully for nearly thirty years to stem the flood of black people to the urban industrial areas but the dual forces of black rural poverty and industry's insatiable appetite for cheap labour ensured that the black urban population continued to grow. The government's chief weapons in this regard were the Group Areas Act(1950), the Influx Control laws and the Pass Laws. These laws were also used to move vast numbers of people from one part of the country to another as the government tried to establish separate ethnic homelands.

1.3.3 The emergence of varieties of pidgin.

The implications of this social engineering for the language map of South Africa were profound. Notwithstanding the government's attempts to perpetuate tribal and ethnic divisions in the city complexes these differences under the pressure of urbanization came to have less and less significance for the black urban population. Intermarriage across tribal lines and therefore across language divisions was and is common. As a consequence, among the many cultural and social adjustments made by the black urban population, a number of link languages have developed in the black urban areas. These link languages are varieties of pidgin whose composition is determined from area to area depending on the dominant black languages and which of the two 'official' languages predominate in the area. For example, in the black township of Mamelodi just outside Pretoria where the dominant white language is Afrikaans, the pidgin is derived from the two dominant black languages of the region, Northern Sotho, Tswana and Afrikaans, whereas the pidgin that is used in Soweto to the south of Johannesburg consists predominantly of a mixture of English, Zulu and Tswana. The development of these pidgins cannot be ignored in any discussion about the nature of the variety of black South African Englishes.

1.3.4 Bantu Education.

It was during what is arguably the period of South Africa's greatest urban and industrial growth, from 1950-1976, that the government imposed its policy of Bantu Education. Black education which until 1953 had been largely the preserve and responsibility of religious and provincial bodies, was taken over by the central government. The stated aim of Dr Verwoed's Bantu Education Act(1953) was to ensure that the black population was kept in a subserviant position in order to keep the labour market supplied with cheap labour.

"We should not give the Natives any academic education. If we do, who is going to do the manual labour in the community?" (JN Le Roux, 1945 National Party politician)

"When I have control over native education, I will reform it so that natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them." (Dr Verwoed, 1953)

It was this policy and more particularly the policy of Dr Verwoed's successor, Dr Andries Treunicht, of forcing black pupils to learn some of their subjects through the medium of Afrikaans that led to the pupils' revolt in Soweto in 1976 and which has been at the heart of the education crisis in black education ever since.

The implications for language teaching of the Bantu Education Act will now be examined. Because the stated aim of Bantu Education was to provide an inferior education that would not give the blacks the wherewithal to rise above their station of institutionalized inferiority no accommodation was made to teach English in any way to empower learners to master the language. EL2 or EFL instruction was aimed at ensuring that learners/users were no more competent in English than to be able to understand orders, commands and instructions. Basic reading and writing skills congruent with the stated aim were provided. Teaching English as a tool for cognitive development and exploration was ignored. Thus the emphasis in English language teaching fell on what could be easily tested and quantified: lists of antonyms and synonyms, direct and indirect speech, idioms and parts of speech and so on. The fact that, for example, mine workers need to be trained over the course of a month in a completely new language, Fanakalo which is a mixture of English, Afrikaans, Zulu and Xhosa, indicates how unreliable EL2 teaching is in formal institutions.

The Separate Universities Act(1959) further excaserbated the situation. Separate ethnic universities supposedly established to serve the different ethnic and language groupings were established to provide a professional class deemed to be necessary to run the emerging homelands and bureaucracies. The language of instruction at these institutions was overwhelmingly English. One of the consequences of this policy was that there was a very high failure rate especially at first year level.

1.3.5 Immigrant pressures

The 1960s and 70s saw an influx of European settlers largely from the ex-Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique. These people were integrated with full political rights into white society. Their children in the main attended white English speaking schools where they were taught through the medium of English and where they were expected to achieve an EL1 standard. Some official provision was made to teach English to these immigrants but only if they enrolled in Afrikaans schools, and then English was taught by Afrikaans speakers. Special classes were organized to teach them what became known as immigrant Afrikaans. The sudden influx of large numbers of Portuguese speaking children into the English speaking schools placed an enormous burden on the teachers who were in no way equipped to deal with the language demands the situation created. In any event, many of the English speaking schools in the main metropolitan areas and majority on the platteland had a majority of EL2(Afrikaans mother tongue speakers) teachers on their staffs, there having been a decline in the number of EL1 speakers into the profession more or less at the same time as the primary school population expanded. Thus, the models both EL1 and EFL primary school learners were presented with were non-native speakers.

1.3.6 Models for black learners of English

The situation in black primary schools is as follows: there are with the exception of rare cases no EL1 teachers since this is discouraged. English at primary level is taught by EFL speakers who were themselves taught by EFL speakers. But more to the point these teachers, 90% of whom had three years secondary schooling plus two years teacher training, are expected to teach through the medium of English from the fourth year of primary school (+/- age 10). In 1985 fewer than 3% of teachers in black education were graduates. Of these a minority had more than a one year course in English, none of whom had any training at academic level in teaching EFL or EL2 other than approaches and methods they themselves were exposed to. In the last few years a sprinkling of black graduate teachers have attended honours courses in applied linguistics at the universities of the Witwatersrand and Cape Town. Most white teachers in black education are in any case Afrikaans speaking, although they may be teaching their subjects through the medium of English with the result that black learners are not exposed to mother-tongue models. An anecdote will illustrate this point. This year the Johannesburg College of Education admitted several black students to the Bachelor of Primary Education course. One of these students confessed that until he arrived on the JCE campus he had never spoken to a white person. Such is the success of the apartheid system. He is at present registered for a first year course in English.

1.3.7 People's Education

Various attempts have been made in recent years to address the crisis in black education. The De Lange Commission of 1981/2 represented a major government inspired endeavour, but failed to make much impact because it had all the appearance of being yet another white/capitalist solution to the problem. The black community, profoundly concerned that an entire generation of children was being disadvantaged by continued confrontation between the forces of officialdom and the students, undertook to get the students back to school. The notion of People's Education for People's Power was first articulated at a conference called by the Soweto Parents' Crisis Committee in 1985. Since then under the aegis of the National Education Crisis Committee People's Education has become the democratic response to the authoritarian policy of officialdom. "It is meant to replace education for exploitation as well as education for domestication."(6) Within the context of People's Education language teaching is intended to empower learners to use English as a cognitive tool to:

- understand the evils of apartheid and to think and speak in non-racial, non-sexist and non-elitist ways
- determine their own destinies and to free themselves from oppression
- play a creative role in the achievement of a non-racial democratic South Africa
- use English effectively for their own purposes
- express and consider the issues and questions of their time
- transform themselves into full and active members of society
- proceed with their studies(7)

People's Education acknowledges the need to democratise education so that the spirit of consultation and negotiation infuses the development of resources, materials, curriculae, syllabuses and methodologies. Language is seen as central to the education process in that it will empower individuals in a truly democratic non-racial South Africa. As far as we know the specifics of testing have not been addressed, but whatever form they take it will have to be within the spirit of non-elitism and consultation that lie at the heart of People's Education. How this is going to be achieved remains in the realm of speculation. Given that some testing is being contemplated it will, as any good test must, discriminate one learner from another. Whether this will be perceived by the ideologues as a distorted form of elitism we cannot tell, except that during a particularly critical period of "unrest" the Comrades did use, besides the slogan Liberation before Education, the plea: "Pass one, pass all, or fail one, fail all."

1.4. Factors needed to be taken into account in language evaluation in formal educational institutions.

1.4.1 The existing composition of the student population.

The student population in South Africa reflects to a large extent the overall fragmentation of the population. Instiiutions for higher learning like all other social institutions have been regulated according to the government's policy of racial segregation. The separate univer-

sities act imposed racial/ethnic separation on the universities and led to the establishment of a number of universities to serve the black communities. Traditionally before 1959 with the exception of the University of Fort Hare, universities had been divided between the Afrikaans- and English- speaking communities. Black students had been accepted at the English-speaking universities. However, the traditional and legislated separation of the races had always been a fact in teacher-training institutions. The same principle of separation applied to primary and secondary schools, though with the exception of the two official language groups no provision was made to separate black schools according to language group untill after the publication of the Bantu Education Act.

Increasingly, since 1976, with the crisis in black education, middle-class and affluent black parents have sought places in private white schools for their children. There has been opposition to this practice both from government and from the less fortunate in the black communities. Nonetheless, the number of black children attending private white schools has greatly increased in the last ten years. This is particularly true of the Roman Catholic private schools. The situation at teacher training level has remained to all intents and purposes unchanged with the sole exception of the Johannesburg College of Education (a government institution) with a student population of 1800 where in the last four years a sprinkling of blacks have been admitted via the Bachelor of Primary Education degree which the College teaches for the University of the Witwatersrand. In 1987 there are 10 black students enrolled at JCE. On the face of it this figure can only be described as pathetic, given the demands of education and the facilities available. However it could be argued that these ten students represent the thin edge of the wedge and an opportunity to address the language issue at this level of education before inevitably increased numbers make the problem unmanageable. Be that as it may, the rest of the student population at JCE is a cross section of the "white" community of languages with some students being EL2 speakers. The main point to be made though is that it is anticipated that both the nature of the school going population (initially in the private schools and later in government schools) is likely to change radically as the country is forced to change its political and social systems. Anticipated change of this nature has serious implications for the composition of the student body at least at JCE to begin with. Such changes will not be painless. Political resistance can be expected, but it would seem that the process is already underway and has reached such a stage that it will be impossible to reverse in the long run.

Thus a major factor that needs to be taken into account is the exisiting composition of the language community within tertiary institutions which are in many instances already experiencing the strains of change; strains that are throwing into question the whole issue of standards.

A further factor in this process is the role of Vista University, a peripatetic institution (established by government in 1980) designed to help black teachers upgrade their qualifications. 42 000 out of the 45 000 black teachers in 1985 had less than a matric school leaving certificate followed by a two year diploma(8). Vista relies for its intake on teachers pressured into upgrading their qualifications as the State places more and more emphasis and importance on paper qualifications in order to gradually eliminate the inequalities between black and white education. The pursuit of paper qualifications has meant that real competence has suffered as the government has literally tried to paper over the cracks in the system.

1.4.2 How do tertiary institutions accomodate the language varieties?

We have already noted the wide variety of different kinds of spoken English in South Africa. A major consideration is how much should tertiary institutions accomodate those varities? Until now only Standard British English in writing has been tolerated, at least in theory, whereas there has been a wider degree outside educational institutions of tolerance for different varieties of spoken South African English. However, in an education system where there is a predominant emphasis on the written word Standard British English has great prestige and has been entrenched for historical and non-linguistic reasons. As might be expected the most concerted resistance to admitting other varieties of English to academic discourse has come from English departments that see themselves in the vanguard of maintaining the prestige of English (especially English literature) in a world geographically far from and politically antagonistic to the English heritage. The result has often been an exaggerated regard for the perceived standard of written British English, and often little more than scorn for South African varieties. Nor is this regard the monopoly of, as they see themselves, beleaguered English departments. Suspicion of South African varieties and regard for perceived British English are also expressed by those blacks educated by missionaries before the implementation of Bantu Education.

By way of contrast we may consider briefly the situation in the Afrikaans speech community in which there is a high degree of standardization. Die Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (Academy for Sciences and the Arts) has a role and status similar to the Academie Francais. It is the final arbiter on all issues affecting grammar, the lexicon, pronounciation etc. As the watchdog of Afrikaans it actively discourages the introduction of anglicisms and the lowering of any of the standards it sets through its influence in the schools and the state controlled media. In addition the Afrikaans speech community is not subject to the same pressures for change as the English speech community. The black population has rejected Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor. Immigrants prefer to send their children to English schools because they see the learning of English as having more practical value than Afrikaans

as an international medium of communication. The only black community in which Afrikaans is widely spoken, that of the Cape Coloureds, is relatively small in number, politically emasculated and without economic or cultural influence. This may change but at present it is not a factor to be considered. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that because of political factors middle- and upper- class Coloureds are abandoning Afrikaans for English.

1.4.3 What should the 'standard' be?

To return to the question of English, there are considerable forces at work to maintain standard English without there being much understanding of what that standard might be. In practice what is taken as standard is what is taught and assessed. Given the multiplicity of departments of education, the numbers and grades of different English examminations set for different school leaving certificates, the question of what is standard becomes highly problematical.

1.4.4 The number of school-leaving examinations.

Statistics are hard to come by. The government's policy of separation has ensured that the separate and duplicated departments of education in the country have little contact and communication with one another. However the following statistics can be estimated:

Dept of Ed.	No. of Exams	Levels		
JMB	1st lang.	Higher,	Standard,	Ordinary
	2nd "	"	"	"
Transvaal	1st "	"	"	"
	2nd "	"	"	"
Cape	1st "	"	"	"
	2nd "	"	"	"
OFS	1st "	"	"	"
	2nd "	"	"	"
Natal	1st "	"	"	"
	2nd "	"	"	"
DET	1st "	"	"	
	2nd "	"	"	
Coloured	1st "	"	"	
	2nd "	"	"	
Indian	1st "	"	"	
	2nd "	"	"	
TOTAL	16	16	16	10

Grand total of possible exams & levels of certification 36. These figures do not include the education departments of the so called independant homelands. All in all there are 18 separate departments of education in South Africa.

There are at least eight different examining bodies each setting exams for both first and second language learners, and of these the exams sat by white school leavers have three options of higher, standard and ordinary grades. The number of different levels within the "white" school leaving exams suggests that greater concessions are made to white EL1 and EL2 speakers making it easier for them to pass English and be at an advantage in the job market.

1.4.5 The character of examinations

Very few EL2 school leaving exams are set by EL1 speakers. With the exception of the "white" first language exams it is unlikely that any of the other exams are set by EL1 speakers. Again, statistics are difficult to come by. However ideological considerations must be taken into account. After the publication of the Bantu Education Act(1953) the number of EL1 speakers in black education decreased rapidly as the government took over black education. The situation was exacerbated in 1959 with the Separate Universities Act which resulted in an almost total boycott of black universities by English speaking academics. The administration of black education fell largely on the shoulders of Afrikaans speaking bureaucrats and educators. These people received higher salaries than their black counterparts and other material privileges, and what is more they had a vested interest in making the system appear to work. Black advancement was slow. Whatever the case, the examiners who set EL2 exam papers are not EL1 speakers. The implications for language teaching have been profound. As a consequence of fragmentation, lack of contact between departments of education, vested interest and ideological commitment there has been virtually no innovation or creativity in the way language is taught or exams are set. Markers are provided with memoranda which permit little flexibility. The effect on students has been to encourage stereotyped responses to language exams.

2. The methods of assessment typically employed in South Africa at school leaving level ie matriculation level after 12 years of formal schooling.

A school leaving certificate from any of the eight examining bodies in theory permits entrance to a tertiary institution, though in practice EL examinees would apply to English universities and EL2 examinees would apply to either Afrikaans universities or Black universities. In any case the school leaving certificate is meant as an official endorsement of a general competence in the four basic skills. Any prospective employer or tertiary institution which interpreted this certificate as a measure of overall competence would however be disappointed.The weighting in terms of overall raw scores reflects nothing like a balance between productive and receptive skills, nor even between written and spoken language production. Typically, on a 400 point scale, 80 points are allocated to oral production and 320 to written production. Reading and listening are not in fact tested, or if they are they would form part of the 80 mark oral component.

Put bluntly, a school leaving candidate need not open his/her mouth and may still score 80% in the examination which purports to measure overall general competence in the candidate.

The school leaving examination itself is taken over the period of about a month, during which time six or seven subjects are written. English (either 1st or 2nd language levels) will take up to seven hours of writing and about half an hour will be devoted to testing a candidate's oral proficiency.

Three of the seven hours of writing are devoted to student responses on topics of a literary kind, set from a fixed number of texts (normally four) studied over the course of a year.

Two of the seven hours will be spent writing an essay of some 750 words in length, usually on a topic of some general nature, such as 'Reflections on Childhood', and a letter and paragraph.

The remaining two hours of this seven hour writing marathon is made up of a comprehension test, a precis, and the usual de- contextualized discreet-point test items that one saw in most English language papers twenty or thirty years ago.

eg. Re-write the following passage using:
active voice
or
passive voice
or
direct speech
or
reported speech
or
filling in the missing prepositions
or
filling in the correct form of the verb
or
supplying synonyms for underlined words
etc
etc

There may be minor variations to this pattern but the stark and sobering fact of the matter is that South African school-leavers come out of twelve years of formal education where approximately 2000 hours are devoted to EL1 or EL2 tuition and most are in need of further tuition before they can comfortably write a term paper at first year university level, or take coherent succinct notes from lectures or speak fluently in a first year tutorial.

In an attempt to confront this problem the Johannesburg College of Education instituted a language and learning across the curriculum programme in 1981. Taking its cue from Michael Marland(11) the programme was started on the assumption that language is central to the learning processes demanded by all the subjects in the students' curriculum. Those involved in the programme strove to get a commitment from the teaching staff to take active responsibility for the language demands of their particular disciplines and the language problems those disciplines created for the students. Strategies were devised to raise student and staff language awareness. Special attention was given to the quality of student language in assessing assignments, essays, tests and exams. Although the programme could and has claimed some success over the years such successes have been isolated and episodic. It must be admitted that little has been achieved in raising the overall language standards of first year students which since we started monitoring their performance have shown no signs of improving. It is cetainly our experience that the school leaving exam in English gives no indication of student proficiency. This has also been the experience of the University of the Witwatersrand which caters for a much more heterogenius group of students than that found at JCE.

This state of affairs prompts the authors of this paper to question the value of much of the formal classroom teaching that goes on in South African schools. By suggesting what can be done about the situation we will at the same time consider the second question we posed at the beginning of this paper ie what do teachers in training in South Africa need to know about language testing?

3. What do students need to know about language testing?

3.1 The basics.

It seems almost superfluous to mention many of the items and issues that might be regarded as the basics that teachers in training should be familiar with, as they have already been recorded and described extensively elsewhere(12). However,it is clear from our experience that many if not most practising teachers we have come into contact with in the course of our professional

duties as lecturers at the Johannesburg College of Education do not know or understand what we take to be fundamental knowledge in the field of language testing. For the sake of clarity then and in the interests of brevity we consider it essential that student teachers should be familiar with the different methods of testing and the reasons one test might be preferred to another depending on what is being tested and why. For example, norm referencing as opposed to criteron referenced tests; proficiency vs achievement vs diagnostic vs progress tests; discreet or integrative types of questions. The concepts of reliability, validity and discrimination together with the notion of normal distribution of scores should be part of their testing equipment.

There is, of course, in initial training institutions simply not enough time to put students through a rigorous and comprehensive course on testing, and to accommodate the need for trained teachers the Human Sciences Research Council(HSRC) and the National Institute for Personel Research(NIPR) undertake training and certification. Many teachers, in order to be able to administer the usual IQ tests to children at school, undertake this training on an in-service basis. Schools without a certified tester on the staff would normally make use of one of a number appointed by an education department for this specific purpose.

Very little experimentation or in situ research on testing takes place in formal institutions. (Understandably)

Perhaps the area most in need of attention, not only in training institutions but also in schools themselves, is in the interpretation of test scores.

On a national level, the school leaving(matriculation) certificate is founded on a norm-referenced system. Rates of failure vary from year to year by at most 2% (For very obvious reasons of fulfilling labour/manpower quotas. Some would claim that there are more sinister reasons such as the educational bosses making certain that whites are certified and qualified to remain in positions of authority. This is because white matriculation failure rates have not varied much beyond 5% in the last five years, whereas Black matriculation(DET) failure rates hover around 50% year after year.)

This management on a national level of matriculation results filters down into exams at the lowest levels of the schools. Teachers frequently need to adjust marks awarded in tests, in order to bring these marks into line with school averages, which are tied to public examination averages all within the framework of the national norms. This situation often arises when the facility value or difficulty level of a test is too high. Children whose marks are reduced do not understand the concept of raw scores, and often neither do the teachers. This results in much ill-feeling and distrust amongst pupils and some may be unfortunate enough to experience the problem when they are five years old. This sort of unfortunate situation could easily be avoided by training students in the interpretation of scores.

The phenomenon of whole population groups being norm-referenced, by differing norms is a remarkably subtle form of discrimination, and since it is practised in education has far reaching socio/political implications. This goes some way to answering the question posed in the title.

3.2. Attitudinal changes.

Not only do the procedures of testing themselves need to be taught but the attitudes underlying testing and the reasons for testing also need to be reconsidered.

Not only should students be aware of why they are testing and what they are testing but they should also be aware that testing should be an integral part of the learning process, that is, that a good test has a "backwash" effect. At present testing tends to be seen as separate from the learning process. Language knowledge is treated as a quantifiable product the testing of which is directly related to the aquisition of paper qualifications. However, if language learning is going to be transformed so that the aquisition of language is perceived as a means of empowering learners to operate creatively and effectively within the language environment then both the methods of teaching and testing will have to change to accomodate different attitudes to language learning. Thus testing seen in terms of nothing but achievement tests must be adapted or changed to accomodate different testing procedures with different goals.

In this regard, trainee teachers must be introduced to and encouraged to explore new procedures of testing that can be related to non-authoritarian, open-ended process approaches in which learners are encouraged to regard language as a means of effecting greater control of their lives. Such an attitude to the teaching of language exists in some EL1 teaching, and the exam reflects the kind of innovative teaching that is encouraged at this level. Thus, as much as anything else what is required is an attitudinal change on the part of teachers. Such an attitudinal change in language teaching and testing cannot be seen as separate from attitudinal changes in the wider context of the culture as a whole. The methods of teaching and testing EL2/EFL are expressions of and reflections of the authoritarian attitudes that prevail in the society as a whole. As society moves towards accomodating and promoting more truly democratic attitudes so it is hoped that education as a whole, and language teaching and testing in particular, will reflect that change. We are under no illusion that authoritarian and hierarchical attitudes are deeply entrenched in the culture and will take a long time to change. However, a start must and is being made.

4. Conclusion.

The control of the State through its various agencies in upholding the separation of ethnic/language groups has embedded a kind of teaching and testing in formal institutions which does not equip the population for the demands that are made on it after school. South

Africans who are bilingual and there are many who are multilingual, achieve this inspite of formal training and not because of it. As most language testing is aimed at certification, that is, it is achievement orientated, student teachers need to know little other than how the system operates: testing reflects the teaching, the teaching reflects the attitudes and the attitudes reflect the policies.

In short, what they are not asked to consider, and what they should be considering are the various purposes for which tests are used. Little or no time at all is given to diagnostic and proficiency testing. Little or no time at all is devoted to test design standardization or test validation. What they may know from an introductory course in psychology is what a standardized test is, but generally speaking our trainee teachers go into schools with a patchy and superficial knowledge of the test as an instrument of refinement and usefulness.

The authors of this paper recognize that education in South Africa is in a state of flux. We anticipate that in time it is likely to become much more responsive to the multi-racial composition of the country than it is at present; that, at least in urban areas, there will be a greater degree of integration than there has been hitherto. When, if ever, full integration is achieved can be left to speculation. Suffice it to say the process towards integration is underway. It is likely that this process will be resisted by the existing hegemony while the pressures created by progressive democratic forces will continue to press for its fulfilment. Teachers and pupils are caught in the middle. For the foreseeable future education in South Africa will be characterized by conflict, tension and uncertainty. The pressures this puts on teachers in training and their instructors is considerable. In such a situation conservative forces, especially those in powerful and influential positions resist innovation. Deviation from present practice is regarded with suspicion. The State's response to People's Education is a case in point.

The forces resisting change in education in South Africa cannot be underestimated. As we have noted already in this paper the placement of persons according to ethnic criteria and the more general fragmentation of every aspect of life in South Africa has perpetuated long out of date teaching and testing methods and inhibited change and innovation. Thus what teachers know about testing is what they have learnt by being tested, just as what, in many respects, they have learnt about teaching they have learnt by being taught. The teaching corps has come through the process and understands it. Syllabus designers too are loathe to change. Thus syllabuses and the testing procedures associated with them have become entrenched and self-perpetuating.

(1) Stephen Gray Southern African Literature An Introduction(1979)
(2) ibid p.53
(3) George Griffith Briton or Boer(1897) p.28.
(4) Hume Nisbet For Right and England(1900) p.35.
(5)Landeg White & Tim Couzens Literature and Society in South Africa(1984) p.63.
(6) ibid. p.64.
(7) Z K Matthews Freedom for my people (1981) p.54.
(8) Michael Gardiner "Liberating Language: People's Education for the Future" LENGWITCH March 1987 p.40.
(9) ibid. p.45.
(10)Abantwana Bazabalaza: a memorandum on children(1987) an unpublished DPSC document p.145.
(11)Michael Marland Language Across the Curriculum
(12)J B Heaton Writing English Language Tests(1975)